



Congressman Lee M. Zeldin

First Congressional District of New York

June 30, 2017

The Honorable David Shulkin
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin:

We were pleased to review your announcement of a plan to dispose of or repurpose vacant buildings throughout the VA system. Like you, we are concerned over the prevalence of vacant and unused buildings at VA Medical Center facilities and believe that taxpayer funds are best utilized by administering healthcare rather than maintaining empty buildings. We share your desire to address this issue, and we appreciate your dedication to serving our nation's veterans.

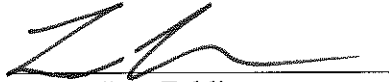
As you are aware, the Northport VA Medical Center (Northport VAMC) is a nearly 90 year old medical facility which serves tens of thousands of veterans from across Long Island. While this facility, not unlike others, has faced challenges over the years, the dedicated men and women who work at Northport VAMC strive to provide top notch healthcare to all those who enter their facility. Recently, however, several maintenance and demolitions projects have arisen that require immediate attention in order to provide the best possible care for Long Island's veterans.

Among the issues to be addressed at Northport VAMC, perhaps one of the most pressing issue is the vacant or unused buildings on campus. Buildings 1, 2, 18 and 23 have been unused for an extended period of time, yet they remain on campus. While these buildings are already in a complete state of disrepair, VA acknowledges that these defunct facilities still cost the taxpayers an average of \$7 million per year. Both patients and the dedicated staff members at the Northport VAMC would be much better served if these funds were spent on healthcare delivery or other services at Northport. As you are aware, this issue is not unique to Northport; over 350 buildings across the VA system are either vacant or mostly vacant, costing taxpayers millions upon millions of dollars, and diverting necessary resources away from our veterans.

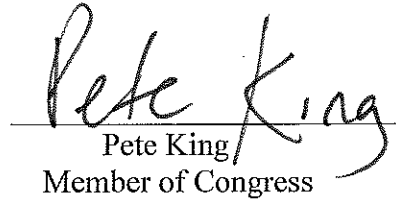
As you move through the process of identifying and addressing facilities in need of disposal or repurposing, we urge you to keep the needs of Northport in mind and ensure these projects are addressed in a timely manner. Both Suffolk and Nassau Counties are home to some of the highest veteran populations in the country, and anything less than the best possible care and service is a disservice to these brave men and women.

Again, we thank you for your commitment to follow through on your promise to dispose of all vacant buildings within 24 months, and we look forward to working with you in service to our nation's veterans. This will be a valuable first step in improving the quality of care throughout the VA system.

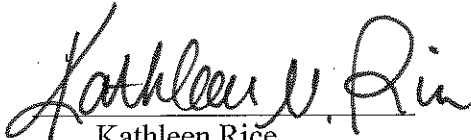
Sincerely,



Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress



Pete King
Member of Congress



Kathleen Rice
Member of Congress



Thomas Suozzi
Member of Congress